



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

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# News Release

## **OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000**

*Puerto Rico area accounts for six arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Six of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in the Puerto Rico-U.S. Virgin Islands area.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that arrests in the 20-month long effort have surpassed 5,000. Among those individuals arrested here are:

- Edward Polonco, a 26-year-old citizen of the Dominican Republic and a legal permanent resident of the United States. ICE agents arrested Polonco on February 17, 2004, for possessing material containing minor children performing lascivious and sexual acts.
- Santiago Ocasio, formerly a school teacher and tutor, had access to numerous children from the community whom he photographed in erotic positions. ICE agents arrested Santiago Ocasio on April 13, 2004.
- Robinson Gonzalez-Mejias, 51, a citizen of Chile, was arrested by ICE agents on January 12, 2005, for his conviction of sodomy with aggravated sexual battery against a 13-year-old minor.

Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative aimed at those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, child pornographers and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable.

“Sexual predators will not go unpunished for their heinous crimes,” said Roberto G. Medina, ICE Special Agent-in-Charge for the San Juan Puerto Rico office. “ICE will find you and bring you to justice.”

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE's mission to find and deport illegal aliens -- particularly those with criminal records -- and reflects the agency's traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

**Foreign National Child Predators:** More than 85 percent of the arrests in Operation Predator involve foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported.

**International Child Sex Tourists:** Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE's attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents have made 14 arrests under the child sex tourism provisions of the Protect Act, which was signed into law in 2003.

**Human Smuggling and Trafficking of Children:** The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger.

**Internet Child Pornography:** Drawing on ICE's cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation's virtual borders. One massive investigation has resulted in more than 1,200 arrests worldwide, marking the first time the U.S. government has gone after the financial side of child pornography. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov). ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*